DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 046 646 RE 003 217

AUTHOR	Maxwell, Martha J.
TITLE	What the College Reading Teacher Needs to Know About Reading.
PUB DATE	28 Mar 69
NOTE	9p.; Paper presented at the Western College Reading Association Meeting, Mar. 28, 1969
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*College Programs, Course Descriptions, *Education Courses, Graduate Students, Methods Courses, *Practicums, *Reading Instruction, *Reading Programs, Specialists

ABSTRACT

Weaknesses in the reading course background and the high turnover rate of many college reading specialists along with an increased demand for these people to help disadvantaged college youth led the author to develop a course and practicum for graduate students who wished to enter this field. The course included these topics: (1) philosophy and objectives of college reading programs, (2) diagnostic and screening procedures and instruments, (3) instructional methods and techniques, (4) evaluation of materials and equipment, (5) techniques for teaching specific reading skills, (6) problems that affect individual improvement, (7) establishing and administering a college reading program, and (8) assessing individual improvement and evaluating the reading program. The practicum contained training in (1) testing and disgnosis, (2) setting up individualized improvement programs, (3) using materials and equipment, (4) evaluating student progress, (5) preparing case studies, (6) conducting research, (7) conducting followup interviews, and (8) develcping new materials. References are given. (DE)

ED 046646

Martha J. Maxwell, Ph.D., Director
Reading and Study Skills Service
University of California at Berkeley

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

WHAT THE COLLEGE READING TEACHER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT READING

Before analyzing the needs of tomorrow's reading teachers, let us first answer the question, "What does today's college reading teacher know about teaching reading?" Several years ago I studied the characteristics of members of the College Reading Association (Maxwell, 1967). I analyzed 304 applications for membership and discovered that these professional people typically had been working in the reading field for one year or less. In other words, they had entered the profession very recently. What reading training had they had? Sixty-nine percent of the members without doctorates reported having had a background course in reading while only 60% of the doctorates claimed to have any course work in reading. About half of the group reported having had some practicum or clinical training in reading. So about 40% of the group had had no formal course work in reading methodology. (Note: Sixty-eight percent of the group held jobs as reading consultants and I trust these were

---

Paper read at the Western College Reading Association Meeting, March 28, 1969.

RE 003 217

the ones who had taken background courses...although the relationship between course background and present position was not investigated.) At any rate, this study suggests that a large proportion of college reading specialists are "self-trained" at best and reveals the great need for professional reading associations to provide basic inservice training for novitiates in the reading field.

Since it appears obvious that many lack specific training for their positions, how do people get into the college reading field? In the same study, I analyzed the major graduate fields of reading members with doctorates and found that they came from a wide variety of academic disciplines, ranging from administration to optometry and mathematics. Most, however, were trained in elementary education, English or educational psychology. Perhaps many entered the college reading field as I did--fresh out of graduate school with a shiny Master's degree in counseling, I was offered a job in a college counseling center with the stipulation that I was also to teach a night course in reading improvement. Being hungry at that point, I was not about to argue that I lacked formal preparation in reading methods. I took the job.

Although I entered the field many years ago, there is considerable evidence that this is still the route by which many enter the college reading field. That the profession operates like a revolving door is also a reality. Many persons enter annually, many leave annually, and few remain. For example, in the CRA study, I found that only 15% of the group had been in the field ten or more years, suggesting that: 1. either persons do not remain in the college

reading field for long or 2. those who have been around for years do not remain as members in professional associations. There is considerable evidence that older persons in the field do join more organizations and publish more, so we can infer that the former explanation may be the most accurate.

Sheldon (1967) reported that in the field of reading research, there are many "one-shot" papers and suggested that doing a study in "reading" was an easy way to get a doctorate for most of these investigators' names never again appeared in the professional literature of reading. In my study, 10% of the members with doctorates reported having published more than ten papers.

Has there been recent improvement in the preparation of college reading teachers? I'm not sure that we are much further advanced today. Although Junior College populations are increasing at a rapid rate, and the demand for college reading services seems to be increasing, there is not a great rush in our graduate programs for people to train to be college reading specialists. One of my functions at the University of California is to set up a training program for high school and college reading specialists. I am finding that most graduate students are far more interested in preparing to work with the younger culturally different child who needs remedial help, than they are in preparing to help our educationally deprived older students to get into and remain in college. Were we truly a profession, we would be very concerned about attracting new, capable young people into the college reading field, seeing that they are well trained and setting standards for adequate performance on the job.

There is a tremendous current demand for personnel and training facilities to assist the high academic risk student who may get into the college of his choice where he will find the competition extremely rough and survival in college almost impossible unless he gets extra help. To meet this need, many people from counseling, English or education are being hired (usually with minimal preparation in the reading field) to provide reading and study skills services for these students.

What training facilities are available for preparing college reading specialists? Gluck (1968) sent out questionnaires to a random selection of 200 colleges and other institutions. She received 70 replies. (Does this suggest that reading teachers can't write?) Over half were instructors in English or reading, or training to be. Twenty-one percent of this sample indicated they had no training or were self-taught; about half had some courses to a Master's degree. She reported that nine of the responding California institutions offer a Master's in reading. She also found that in California secondary teachers are not required to complete a course in reading methods. Forty percent of her respondents indicated a desire for further training in developmental reading at the high school or advanced level.

Despite the limitations of her study, it does reveal the dearth of facilities for training high school and college reading specialists. These findings are consistent with a study of 56 college reading specialists (18 with doctorates and 38 with Master's degrees) surveyed by Katherine Dever (1956) at Teachers College in 1956.

She reported that almost half of the college people surveyed wanted additional courses in reading or related areas.

Traditionally college instructors, including college reading specialists, received no training in teaching methods. A doctorate is viewed as automatically qualifying one to teach one's subject. Yet the reading practitioner himself is usually aware of his limitations in dealing with the college student and his problems. In 1960 Strang surveyed 79 colleges and found that about half had developmental reading training courses, but "almost all of them focused on high school rather than college levels." Very few institutions offered training courses identified as training for college reading specialists. This same state of affairs persists today.

What kinds of training experiences would be valuable to the prospective college reading specialist? Several years ago I sat on a committee which had as its objective setting professional standards for certifying reading specialists through a professional association. (It was proposed to certify practicing "anagnologists" defined as those "students of the art of reading" who met the standards of experience and training set by the association.) In debating the kinds of knowledge desirable for a reading specialist, we listed the following: understanding of human development, counseling techniques, learning theory, cognitive processes and motivation, physiology of learning, sensory processes as they relate to reading, children's literature, psycholinguistics, linguistics, English composition and rhetoric, speech problems and techniques,

personality theory, statistics and experimental design, cultural ahthropology, ad inf. In assessing how long it might take the prospective reading specialist to complete this, we realized its impracticality.

Obviously, we have had to make concessions to fill positions. Our profession is recognized as necessary by deans and budget committees, but the impossibility of trying to locate, much less hire qualified reading specialists at the doctoral or sub-doctoral level results in the common practice of assigning any interested or available person to this service. Learning about how to teach reading occurs after they have accepted the job.

Prompted by many years of frustration in trying to hire either trained or experienced personnel for the Reading and Study Skills Laboratory at the University of Maryland, I developed a didactic course and practicum for training graduate students whom we hoped to eventually employ to staff our service.

The original training program has been described in considerable detail in a 1966 article in the Journal of Reading (Maxwell, 1966). Currently the topics that I include in my Berkeley course are:

1. Philosophy and objectives of college reading programs
2. Diagnostic and screening procedures and instruments (tests and other devices for assessing student strengths and weaknesses)
3. Instructional methods and techniques (both group and individualized techniques are discussed)

4. Evaluation of materials and equipment
(workbooks, mechanical devices and other materials such as card programs are critically evaluated and tested)

5. Techniques for teaching specific skills including:
higher level reading skills
spelling, vocabulary
writing skills
critical reading skills
study skills including listening, note-taking and exam skills, etc.
textbook reading skills

6. Problems that affect individual improvement including emotional, motivational difficulties, physiological factors, learning style, etc.

7. Establishing and administering a college reading program (This includes developing and maintaining relationships with other academic departments within the institution, problems of maintaining student and staff morale, overcoming the "stigma" frequently attached to programs designed to help low achievers, etc.)

8. Assessing individual improvement and evaluating the reading program (This includes topics such as writing annual reports, evaluation techniques including student attitudes, improvement on skills tests, etc., and conducting research.)

In the practicum program, graduate students were trained in the following:

1. Testing and diagnosis of learning difficulties of an individual student

2. Setting up individualized improvement programs

3. Using appropriate materials and equipment and supervising the students' work in the lab

4. Evaluating student progress

5. Preparing and presenting case studies to the staff

6. Conducting research data and working on special research projects

7. Conducting follow-up interviews with students who had been in the program previously

8. Developing new materials (e.g., handouts on techniques for studying particular subjects)

In general the graduate students who took this program expressed satisfaction with their experiences, and we felt they were much better prepared to contribute to our college reading service in a professional manner.

There presently exists sufficient knowledge and theory which can be applied to training college reading specialists to justify special graduate courses in this field.

The opportunity to master these concepts through graduate courses or special programs given by reading associations such as WCRA must be provided if the college reading specialist is to develop into a true professional.

REFERENCES

Dever, Kathryn I. Positions in the Field of Reading. Teachers College Studies in Education (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1956).

Gluck, Suzy. "How Much Reading Can a Reading Teacher Teach if the Teacher Can't Teach Reading," Unpublished paper, 1968.

Maxwell, Martha J. "Training College Reading Specialists," Journal of Reading, 9. December 1966, p.147-155.

_____ "Characteristics of Members of the College Reading Association," March 1967, unpublished paper, mimeographed.

Sheldon, William. Dinner address given at the meeting of the National Reading Association in New Orleans, 1963.